

“MAKE THIS VALLEY FULL OF DITCHES”

NO. 747

**A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“And he said, Thus says the Lord, Make this valley full of ditches. For thus says the Lord, You shall not see wind, neither shall you see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that you may drink, both you, and your cattle, and your beasts. And this is but a light thing in the sight of the Lord: He will deliver the Moabites also into your hand.”
2 Kings 3:16-18.

MANY useful lessons might be gathered from this narrative if we had but time. Upon the very surface we are led to observe the weakness of man when at his utmost strength. Three kings, with three armies well-skilled in war, were gathered to subdue Moab, and lo, the whole of the hosts were brought to a standstill by the simple circumstance that there was a lack of water. How easily can God bewilder and checkmate all the wisdom and the strength of mankind! In circumstances of need how utterly without strength men become! A dry leaf in the hurricane is not more helpless than an army when it finds itself in a wilderness and there are no springs of water. Now they may call their soothsayers, but these cannot deliver them. The allied sovereigns may sit in solemn conclave, but they cannot command the clouds. In vain your shields, O you mighty! In vain your banners, you valiant hosts! The armies must perish, perish painfully, perish without exception, and all for lack of so simple but so necessary a thing as water. Man would gladly play the god, and yet a little water will lay him low.

We may also learn here how easily men in times of difficulty which they have brought upon themselves, will lay their distress upon providence rather than honestly see it to be the result of their own foolish actions. Hear the king of Israel cast the blame upon Jehovah: “For the Lord has called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hands of Moab.” Providence is a most convenient horse to bear the saddles of our folly. As I said in the reading, if we prosper and succeed, we proudly sacrifice to our own wisdom; but if shame and loss follow our folly, then we complain of an unpropitious providence. Alas for man, that he will even rail against his God, rather than acknowledge himself to be in error! Yet we see, on the other hand, that the truly spiritual are by their misfortunes and their necessities driven nearer to God. I do not find Jehoshaphat himself inquiring for a prophet of God until there was no water, and then he said, “Is there not here a prophet of the Lord, that we may inquire of the Lord by him?” When tribulation drives us to the Lord, it is an unspeakable blessing, and makes affliction prove to us one of our greatest mercies. It is a good wave that washes the mariner on the rock; it is a blessed trouble which blows the Christian nearer to his God. If you are led to set loose of the world through your losses and your crosses, be thankful for them; for, if you have lost silver, you have gained that which is better than gold. If, like the dove to the cleft of the rock, your soul flies to God, driven homeward by stress of weather, then be thankful for the tempest for it is safer and better for you than the calm.

But we have no time to dwell on these topics. I rather call your attention to the three kings standing at the door of Elisha’s tent. They had paid him no respect before; he had not been made chaplain to the forces, but he had followed the camp as a volunteer, and lived in obscurity. The poor wise man is precious in the hour of peril. God knows how to bring His servants to honor; and he who poured water on the hands of the Lord’s servant, Elijah, has three kings waiting at his door. Observe that he addressed the king of Israel very sharply indeed, for sinners can claim but little respect from the servants of God—no more than rebels can expect to be treated with profound courtesy by loyal soldiers. The prophet evidently was much disturbed in his mind by the sight of the son of Ahab and Jezebel. Elijah never spoke better than when his fiery soul was thoroughly excited; but Elisha was a man of a milder mood and a gentler spirit, and therefore feeling that his blood was hot and his soul stirred, he did not venture to prophesy.

He felt within himself, “I am not in the right mood. If I were to speak, I might utter my own words rather than the words of my Master. I feel so angry at the very sight of that wicked Jehoram, that I might perhaps say what I should be sorry for in later days.” Therefore Elisha makes a pause. “Bring me a minstrel,” he said; and there was doubtless in the camp some holy songster, some Asaph, some Heman, some sweet psalmist of Israel; and when he laid his fingers among the harp strings, and began to sing one of David’s wondrous strains, the prophet grew more calm and composed. “Sing us one of the songs of Zion,” was doubtless his request to the minstrel; and, when the soft sweet strain had soothed the tumult of his storm-tossed passions, the prophet rose to declare the will of Jehovah. His words were short, but full of force: “Make this valley full of ditches, for thus says the Lord, that valley shall be filled with water.” He would not speak until he felt the divine flame; in the same spirit as those disciples who tarried at Jerusalem until they had received power from on high, he waited until his mind was in a fit state to receive the Holy Spirit, and be the vehicle of the divine mind to those who were round about him. It is well for us, if we have to preach or pray, always to ask the Spirit to help our infirmity, and tune our hearts to the right key, for though our God can use us in any frame of mind, yet we must all be aware that there are certain states in which we become more adapted to be the vehicle of blessing to our fellow men.

The whole of this story may be made useful to ourselves, and therefore we shall notice, first, *our position as set forth by the condition of these kings*; secondly, *our duty as told us by the prophet*; thirdly, *the Lord’s modes of operation as here described*; and then, fourthly, *our further desire for something yet greater than the supply of our merely pressing necessities*.

I. First, then, let us review OUR PRESENT POSITION.

The armies of these kings were in a position of abject dependence—they were dying of thirst; they could not supply their need; they must have from God the help required or they would perish. My brothers and sisters, this is just the position of every Christian church. Every truly Christian church not only is dependent upon God, but feels it, and there is a grave difference between the two; for some churches whose creed is orthodox upon this point, nevertheless act as if they could do as well without the Holy Spirit as with Him. I trust *we* may never be brought into such a condition. Remember, my brothers and sisters, unless our religion is altogether hypocrisy and a lie, we have the Holy Spirit. It is not we *may* have Him and be thankful, but we *must* have the Holy Spirit’s power and presence, and the assistance of the Most High, otherwise our religion will become a mockery before God, and a misery to ourselves. We *must* have the aid of the Holy Spirit, for ours is not a mechanical religion. If our worship consisted in the reading of forms, “appointed by authority,” we could do exceedingly well without the assistance of the Spirit of God. If we believed in the manipulations of priestcraft, and thought that after certain words, and genuflections, and ceremonies, all was done, it would matter little to us whether we had the conscious presence of God or not. If we could regenerate by water applied by hands saturated with the oil of apostolic succession, we should have no particular need to pray for the benediction of the Holy Spirit; and if the utterance of certain words, even if by profane lips, could turn bread and wine—oh, horrible dogma!—into the flesh and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, we could wondrously well afford to dispense with the Spirit of God. But *we* cannot thus deceive ourselves. Ours is not a religion of mechanics and hydrostatics—it is *spiritual*, and must be sustained by spiritual means. If our religion were, on the other hand, one of mere intellectualism, we would only need a well-trained minister who had passed through all the grades of human learning, who had stored himself with the best biblical criticism, and was able to instruct and illuminate our understandings, and we, if we were men of judgment ourselves, could profit exceedingly well. Our faith standing in the wisdom of man, the wisdom of man could easily be found, and our faith could be confirmed. But if, my brothers and sisters, our faith stands not in the wisdom of man, or in the eloquence of human lips, but in the power of God, then in vain do we make a profession unless the Holy Spirit dwells in our inner man!

So dependent is the Christian church upon the Holy Spirit, that there never was an acceptable sigh heaved by a penitent apart from Him; never did a holy song mount to heaven except He gave it wings; never was there true prayer or faithful ministry except through the power and might of the Holy Spirit. Sinners are never saved apart from the Spirit of God. No moral persuasion, no force of example, no po-

tency of logic, no might of rhetoric, ever changed the heart. The living Spirit alone can put life into dead souls. And when those souls are quickened, we are still as dependent as ever upon the Spirit of God. To educate a soul for heaven is as much a divine task as to emancipate a soul from sin. To comfort a desponding Christian, to strengthen his weak hands and confirm his feeble knees, to brighten the eyes of his hope and to give him nerve to hold the shield of his faith—all these are the work of the Spirit of the living God. O Christian, with all the power you have received, you have not strength enough to live for another second, except as the Spirit of God quickens you. All your past experience, all that you have learned and acquired, must go for nothing, except, daily and perpetually, moment by moment, the Spirit of God shall dwell in you, and work in you mightily, to keep you still a pilgrim to the gate of heaven.

Thus, as each individual is dependent, the whole church is dependent in a ten-thousand-fold measure. Without the Spirit of God, we are like a ship stranded on the beach; when the tide has receded, there is no moving her until the flood shall once again lift her from the sands. We are like that frozen ship, of which we read the other day, frost-bound in the far-off Arctic Sea; until the Spirit of God shall thaw the chilly coldness of our natural estate, and bid the life-floods of our heart flow forth, there we must lie, cold, cheerless, lifeless, and powerless. The Christian, like the mariner, depends upon the breath of heaven, or his ship is without motion. We are like the plants of the field, and this genial season suggests the metaphor—all the winter through vegetation sleeps wrapped up in her frost garments, but when the mysterious influence of spring is felt, she unbinds her cloak to put on her vest of many colors, while every bud begins to swell and each flower to open. And so a church lies asleep in a long and dreary winter until God the Holy Spirit loosens the bands of lethargy, and hearts bud and blossom, and the time of the singing of birds is come. This doctrine has been preached hundreds of times, and we all know it, but for all that, we all forget it; and especially when we are in earnest about our work, and perceive our personal responsibility, there is no truth of God that needs to be insisted upon more thoroughly than this, “Without Me, you can do nothing.” Until we are utterly empty of self, we are not ready to be filled by God; until we are conscious of our own weakness, we are not fit platforms for the display of the divine omnipotence. Until the arm of flesh is paralyzed, and death is written upon the whole natural man, we are not ready to be endowed with the divine life and energy.

II. We now proceed to note OUR DUTY as the prophet tells it to us.

The prophet did not tell the kings that they were to procure the water—that, as we have already said, was out of their power—but he did say, “Make this valley full of ditches,” that when the water came there might be reservoirs to contain it. They who pass “through the valley of Baca are to make it a well”—that is *their* business. “The rain also fills the pools”—that is *God’s* business. If we expect to obtain the Holy Spirit’s blessing, we must *prepare for His reception*. “Make this valley full of trenches” is an order which is given me this morning for the members of this church; make ready for the Holy Spirit’s power; be prepared to receive that which He is about to give; each man in his place and each woman in her sphere, make the whole of this church full of trenches for the reception of the divine floods. Before the Nile begins to rise, you see the Egyptians from either side of the banks making ready first the deep channel, and then the large reservoir, and afterwards the small canals, and then the minor pools, for unless these are ready the rising of the Nile will be of little value for the irrigation of the crops in future months; but when the Nile rises, then the water is received and made use of to fertilize the fields; and so, when the treasury of the Spirit is open by His powerful operations, each one of us should have his trench ready to receive the blessed flood which is not always at its height. Have you ever noticed the traders by the river’s side? If they expect a barge of coals, or a vessel laden with other freight, the wharf is cleared to receive it. Have you not noticed the farmer just before the harvest-time—how the barn is emptied, or the brick yard is made ready for the stacks? Men will, when they expect a thing, prepare for the reception of it; and, if they expect more than usual, they say, “I will pull down my barns and build greater, that I may have where to bestow my goods.” The text says to us, “*Prepare for the Spirit of God.*” Do not pray for it, and then fold your arms and say, “Well, *perhaps* He will work.” We ought to act as though we were *certain* He would work mightily—we must *prepare in faith*. Have you ever read that text, “Enlarge the place of your tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of yours habitations: spare not, lengthen your cords, and strengthen your stakes”? What for? “For you shall break forth on the right

hand and on the left.” You are to enlarge your tent first, and then God will send those that will fill it. But the most of people say, “Well, you know, of course, if God sends a blessing, we must then enlarge.”

Yes, that is the way of unbelief, and the road to the curse. But the way of faith and the road to the *blessing* is this—God has promised it; we will get ready for it; God is engaged to bless, now let us be prepared to receive the blessing. Act not on the mere strength of what you have, but in expectation of that which you have asked. Act for God on the faith of what He *will* give, rather than on the faith of what you have as yet obtained. Count God’s notes of hand as cash; believe that, with God, a promise is as good as the fulfillment, and act when you have the promise as you would have acted if you had already seen the promise fulfilled!

Prepare for a blessing! *Prepare largely!* “Make this valley *full* of ditches,” not make *one* trench, but as many as possible. For God, when He works, works like a God. As a king gives not stintedly, like a beggar, so God, in His gifts, is not restrained. Giving will not impoverish Him, and withholding will not enrich Him. Expect great things from a great God! “Make this valley full of ditches.” Have a holy covetousness of the divine blessing. Never be satisfied with what God is doing in the conversion of souls; be grateful, but hunger after more. If He give ten souls, ask for a hundred; if He give a hundred, ask for a thousand; if a thousand, ask for ten thousand. Insatiable as the grave ought the Christian’s heart to be with regard to the glory of God! Here we may swallow the horseleech indeed, and say, “Give, give, give,” with greater vehemence every day, and yet shall not God chide us for the largeness or the importunity of our desires. Open your mouth wide, for God will fill it. “Make this valley full of ditches.”

Moreover, *prepare at once*—not dig trenches in a month’s time, but “make this valley full of ditches” *now*. Oh, that little word “*now!*” it is often the saving word to sinners, and to the Christian it is the quickening word. Tomorrow! Who shall tell how many souls it has destroyed, devouring them as the grave devours the slain! Alas, for the mischiefs of that demon word, *tomorrow*. And who shall say how many Christian churches have been deprived of blessed enlargements by the policy which said, “Wait a little!” Away with this horrible advice! Wait? Impossible! Death waits not! Hell makes no pause! Sin stays not its mad career! If the devil, and death, and hell would wait, we might have an excuse for loitering; but, meanwhile, “Forward!” must be our motto. Now, even now, my brothers and sisters, prepare for the blessing, for God is ready to give it when we are ready to receive it. When the valley is full of ditches, the ditches shall be filled: when the wells are made in the valley of Baca, then shall the pools be filled.

Furthermore, *prepare actively*. Ditch-making is laborious work; God is not to be served by child’s play, or sham work with no toil in it. When a valley is to be trenched throughout its whole length, all the host must give themselves to the effort, and none must shy from the toil. I believe with all my heart in the Spirit of God; but I do not believe in human idleness. Celestial power uses human *effort*. The Spirit of God usually works most where *we* work most. With regard to our own salvation, the meritorious part of that is finished for us; but still it is written, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;” and the reason given is, “For it is God which works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.” We work because God works; to loiter because God works is evil reasoning. Do not tell me that because God will fulfill His own purposes, therefore His people may go to sleep; for it was never His purpose to lull His people to slumber; but His great design is the education of an intelligent host of co-workers with Himself. The Lord has made us and ordained us that we, in our measure, may work together with Him. It is His office to bless our efforts, but it is at once our privilege and our duty for each one of us to yield ourselves as the instruments of the divine purpose. I want every Christian here to feel that if the Lord is about to bless this church, or His church at large, there must be, on the part of every one of us, a shouldering of the spade, and a going forth to diligent, continuous, persevering service, in the name of the Master, according to His will. Give me a lazy church, and say nothing about the Spirit of God—the Spirit of God and lazy churches are a long way off from each other; but give me an earnest church and the Spirit of God, and who knows what may come of such a blessed union! Let but men be prepared to labor, and God is prepared to bless their labor, for is it not written, “Paul plants, and Apollos waters”—and what happens?—“God gives the increase.” He seldom denies the increase where there is a planting

Paul and a watering Apollos. Earnest efforts and believing dependence upon God are sure to be attended with a blessing.

Let me, however, interpret these words, “Make this valley full of ditches,” a little more plainly and pointedly. If we are to have a blessing from God, we are every one of us to have a trench ready to receive it. “Well, how shall I have mine ready?” one asks. My answer is, have large desires for a blessing—that is one trench you can all dig. Brothers and sisters, is it not true that some of you do not want a blessing? If the Lord should give you an unusual blessing, you would hardly thank Him—for you have never hungered and thirsted after it. There are some professors who do not want to be too thoroughly Christian; they are quite afraid of having too much of the Spirit of God; they are for ankle-deep religion; and they had rather not wade further into the stream lest they should be carried away by the current. It would be inconvenient to such persons to have much grace. Do not be afraid, you will not get it; in fact, it will be a question, before long, whether you have any at all. But if a true believer desires much grace, he shall have it. Enlarge, then, your desires, my brothers and sisters; ask for much likeness to your Master, much fellowship with your divine Lord; ask for great faith; ask for clear hope; ask for intelligent views of the truth of God; ask for a burning sense of the value of those truths. “Ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.” Do not stint yourselves, but “make the valley *full* of trenches.” If there is any attainment which has seemed to you up till now to be impossible, long after it. If it is any height of virtue, if it is any excellence of loveliness, or any eminence of grace, let your soul be enlarged. “I speak,” says Paul, “as unto my children” (so may I speak to many among you), “be you also enlarged.” “You are not straitened in the Lord, or in us, but you are straitened in your own heart.” Make the valley of your soul as full as possible of the reservoirs of longing desire for a blessing.

Next, add to these desires, faithful, vehement, and constant *prayers*. “You ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss.” Make your heart full of prayer; and, my brothers and sisters you need not say that you have not subjects for supplication. If you have all you need yourselves, pray for others. Go to God for your children’s salvation. Oh, that our children might be God’s children! They counted the family of Curio happy, of old, because there were three orators in it, the grandsire, the father, and his son; but that is a far happier family where there are three generations of Christians; when the promise is made true, “Instead of the father, shall rise up the children”—when the holy cause descends as an heirloom from the father to the son, and from the son to the next generation, and the next! Pray for this, and be not content without it. Then plead for your servants, your kinsfolk, and your neighbors. Set your heart upon special cases; yearn over those cases; and when you see those converted, long after more, and make your valley full of new trenches, for this is a day of grace, an hour of blessing, and the Lord will give you according to your faith.

Furthermore, if desires and prayers are good, yet activity is even more so. Every Christian who wants to have a blessing for himself or for others, must set to work by active exertion, for this is the word, “Make this valley full of ditches.” If you cannot dig a deep trench, dig a shallow one; and if it cannot be as broad as you wish, let it be as wide as you can make it. I mean this—some of you young men might preach—you have the ability, you have the time for study; I want you to lay out your talents in that holiest of enterprises—in the street corners, anywhere, proclaim Christ. Some of you ought to be teaching in Sunday schools, but you are putting that talent aside; it is rusting, it is spoiling, and you will have no interest to bring to your Master for it. I want that Sunday school talent to be used; I long to see the Sunday school trench deepened and lengthened by everyone doing his share! Many of you might do good service by teaching senior classes at your own houses. This work might be most profitably extended. If our intelligent Christian brothers and matrons would try to raise little classes of six, eight, ten, or 12 at home, I know not what good might come of it. You would not be interfering with anyone else, for in such a city as this, we may all work as hard as we will, and there is no chance of interfering with each other’s labors. This sea is too large here for us to be afraid of other folks running away with our fish. I want to see our whole system of trenches enlarged. Some, of you, perhaps, will do best in tract distribution—well, do it—keep it up; but mind there is something in the tract—and that is not always the case—mind there is something worth reading which will be of use when read. Do not give away tracts which are more likely to send the readers to sleep than to prayer. Some of them might be useful to physicians,

when they cannot get their patients to sleep by any other means. Get something useful, interesting, telling, Scriptural, and give it away largely out of love to Jesus; and if these labors do not suit your taste, talk personally to individuals. Christ at the well! What a schoolmaster for us! Talk to the one woman, the one child, the one butler, and the one laborer, whoever he may be. He who makes one blade of grass grow that would not otherwise have grown, is a benefactor to his race; and he who scatters one good thought which would not otherwise have been disseminated—has done something for the kingdom of Christ. I cannot tell you what is most fit for everybody to do, but if your heart is right, there is something for each one.

There are so many niches in the temple, and so many statues of living stone to fill those niches to make it a complete temple of heavenly architecture. You and I must each find our own niche. Remember, Christian, your time is going. Do not be considering always what you ought to do, but *get to work*; shut your eyes and put your hands out, and “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.” The very first Christian effort will do, only do it with all your might; do it in the name and strength of God. “Make this valley full of ditches.” I would ask God to make this church full of workers, to turn out the drones and multiply the bees. We do not want drones here! We want only those who will bring their share of honey to the common hives—I mean their share of glory to the Lord Jesus Christ. If you are not saved, we will long for your salvation, and be glad that you come among us, and hope that God will bless you; but if you are a church member, and do nothing, the Lord have mercy upon your miserable soul!

One thing more and I leave this point. With all the work that the church does in making the valley full of ditches, we must take care that we do it in a spirit of holy confidence and faith. These ditches were to be dug not because the water *might* come, but because they were *sure* it would come. So we must work for Christ, not because we *may* win souls, but because we *must*. A minister was asked to what point he reached in his faith when he was preaching; he said he prayed, and he *hoped* God would bless the word, and God did bless the word in a measure, according to his faith. But there was another whose conversions were about 10 times as numerous in one month as the other good man’s in a year, and when he was asked in what style he preached, whether he hoped he would have a blessing, he said, “No, I do not hope anything about it; when I go into the pulpit, I am sure of being blessed, because I am preaching God’s word, and have in faith sought His help.” Preaching in faith is sure to be honored of God, and all Christian work ought to be done in the spirit of confidence. Who are the soldiers who win a battle? Not those who walk to the fight half afraid of defeat, but those men who are like the English trumpeter who could sound a charge, but had never learned to sound a retreat. Those are true Christians who do not know how to be beaten, who cannot doubt God’s promise, who do not understand how the gospel can be preached in vain, who do not know how it is possible that Jesus Christ, with His omnipotence, can fail to see of the travail of His soul, but who believe that “The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand,” and who expect Jehovah to follow with a divine result that which is done to His glory. Oh, to dig ditches with the confidence that God, who bade us dig them, will be quite sure to fill them! This is faith’s true place, may we not be slow to occupy it.

III. Thirdly, a few words about the DIVINE OPERATIONS.

Observe, my brothers and sisters, how sovereign the operations of God are. When Elijah wanted rain, there was a cloud seen, and he heard a sound as of abundance of rain, and by-and-by the water descended in floods. But when God would send the water to Elisha, he heard no sound of rain, nor did a drop descend. I know not how it was that the trenches were filled. Whether down some deep ravine, the ancient bed of a dried up torrent, God made the mighty flood to return as He did along the bed of Kishon of old, I do not know, but by the way of Edom the waters came obedient to the divine Command. God is not tied to this or that mode or form. He may in one district work a revival, and persons may be stricken down, and made to cry aloud; but in another place there may be great crowds, and yet all may be still and quiet, as though no deep excitement existed at all. God blesses often by the open ministry, and frequently by the personal and more secret action of His people. He *can* bless as He wills, and He *will* bless as He wills! Let us not dictate to God. Many a blessing has been lost by Christians not believing it to be a blessing because it did not come in the particular shape which they had conceived to be proper and

right. To some the divine work is nothing, unless it assumes the form which their prejudice has selected. Oh, be thankful if it comes! I have been greatly rejoiced at some of the conversions at the Agricultural Hall. I hoped to have heard of many who never went to a place of worship getting a blessing; I dare say we shall hear of them, but curiously enough, the most of those I have heard of, are those who have been here before, or who have been regular attendants elsewhere for years. I did not go abroad to look after my own children, but it is very odd—they say if you want to know something about your own house, you must go away from home; and so, I suppose, in order to be the means of conversion of some of you, it is necessary that I go afield.

Well, so long as God sends blessing, it is not for you or I to have any choice about it. Perhaps if I pray for my own children, He may bless somebody else's children. If I am seeking the good of a child perhaps that may be blessed to an old man, for many a sermon to the young has been made useful to the old. I do not know that prayer does always fall in the same place from which it ascends. Prayer is like a cloud rising from the earth, sure to come back again in rain, but not always bound to return to the same spot. Many of you are praying for a husband or a wife—God has never blessed your husband or wife, but He has remembered others out of regard to your prayer; and, when you come to heaven, you will be content so long as your prayer was answered. Be thankful for revival, brothers and sisters, but do not set up your will as to how it shall come. “You shall not see wind, neither shall you see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water.”

Notice, next, that as the blessing comes sovereignly, so it comes *sufficiently*—there was enough for all the men, for all the cattle, and all the beasts. They might drink as they would, but there was quite enough for all. Let us wait then in prayer upon God, and prepare to be heard, for God has great floods of grace to give according to His riches in glory; by Christ Jesus will He deal out large things to those whose faith is large.

Observe, that this flood came *very soon*, for the Lord is a punctual paymaster. Moreover, it came certainly—there was no mistaking it, no doubting it; and so shall God's blessing wait upon the earnest prayers and faithful endeavors of Christian people—a blessing such as the greatest skeptic shall not be able to deny, such as shall make the eyes of timidity to water, while he says to himself, “Who has begotten me these?” You have only to look up *to* God and *work* for God, and you shall have such a blessing as shall make you wonder at it. Did you notice the word “Behold” in one of the verses following my text? It is a hint that the whole hosts were amazed at it. God will amaze His church with what He will bestow, if they only have the confidence to act as though they believed His promise, and could not think that He would be less gracious than His Word.

Thus I have spoken to you about your duty and about the divine mode of operation. Brothers and sisters, we *must* have the blessing in this particular church—it would be enough to break one's heart even to suppose it possible that we should not. God knows with what earnest desires and endeavors I went to the Agricultural Hall to preach the gospel, and with how simple and sincere a motive you went there, too—we certainly did not journey so far for our own comfort, but for the honor and glory of our Master. And God's word *must* be followed with a blessing. “Thanks be unto God, which always causes us to triumph in Christ, and makes manifest the savor of His knowledge by us in every place, for we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them who are saved, and in them who perish. To the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life.” But I cannot and will not harbor a mistrustful suspicion about the blessing of God resting upon that action, and knowing, as I do, that many of you are really solemnly in earnest with an apostolic earnestness. I am no prophet, nor the son of a prophet, but I am certain God will not withhold the dew, nor keep back the rain; for He never did say to His people, “Seek you My face” in vain. Zion has not conceived the wind, nor shall she bring forth a dream. As soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth children. The earnest agony of a living church must bring forth fruit unto God, or else the Bible is no longer reliable, and the promise of God no longer sure. But He changes not, and therefore we will look for the blessing, knowing that it must come!

IV. Lastly, the Lord bade His servant tell them that not only should there be water, but he said, “This is but a light thing in the sight of God. He will deliver the Moabites also into your hand.” GREATER THINGS are behind, and are to be expected. If the universal Christian church were prepared for a bless-

ing, God would not only give to it a revival in its own border, but make short work, by its means, of all His enemies. At the present moment the Moabites are exceedingly bold, they invade us on all sides; especially do they prevail in the form of Romanists, sneaking into a Protestant church that they may be fed upon the fat of the land. Ah, my brothers and sisters, a revived church will soon make short work of Puseyism. Let the church of God be cold, and dead, and powerless, and Popery will soon spread. Look at Holland. Thirty or 40 years ago how little there was of Romanism in that fine old Protestant country, and now, because philosophy and rationalism have entered into so many of the pulpits, and put away the gospel, Romanists have multiplied like the grass of the field! But only give us the old-fashioned gospel which they used to preach under the “Gospel Oak,” and out in the open fields, where thousands flocked to hear it; only give us the truth as it is in Jesus, and as Samson tore the lion, so would the church tear heresy in pieces! Behold, the evil of the day shall disappear as a moment’s foam melts back into the wave that bears it, if Jehovah does but visit us. These forgers of lies are but of yesterday, and a thing of nothing; their doctrines are the baseless fabric of a vision, without even reason, much less Scripture, to back them up! No, let Israel dig the trenches, and the swords of her warriors will soon find out the hearts of Moab’s mightiest one. So with sin, there is no way of putting down sin except by getting the church of God revived. I am ashamed of some Christians, because they have so much dependence upon Parliament and the law of the land. Much good may Parliament ever do to true religion except by mistake. As to getting the law of the land to touch our religion, we earnestly cry, “Hands off! Leave us alone!” Your Sunday bills and all other forms of acts-of-Parliament-religion seem to me to be all wrong. Give us a fair field and no favor, and our faith has no cause to fear. Christ needs no help from Caesar. Let our members of Parliament repent of the bribery and corruption so rife in their own midst before they set up to be protectors of the *religion* of our Lord Jesus. I would be afraid to borrow help from government; it would look to me as if I rested on an arm of flesh instead of depending on the living God. Let the Lord’s day be respected by all means, and may the day soon come when every shop shall be closed on Sunday; but let it be by the force of conviction and not by force of the policeman; let true religion triumph by the power of God in men’s hearts, and not by the power of fines and punishments. Oh, for more dependence upon the living God, and less reliance upon an arm of flesh, and we shall see yet greater victories won by King Jesus!

So, my brothers and sisters, let us dig the trenches and continue to ask God to send us the water; and as for the Moabites out yonder, whatever shape the sin may take; let us depend upon it, the church of God is enough, through the power of God who dwells in her, to put down sin, and win the kingdom for Christ! I would to God that some here who belong to the Moabites, I mean you unconverted people, might be brought to know the Savior! Some of you know the way well enough, but need the will to run in it. O may the Spirit of God give you that will! A simple trust in Jesus will save you; God grant it to you! After faith, you shall work out of love to Jesus; but all your works *before* you trust in Him will do no good. Come to Him, trust in Him; make your heart this morning full of trenches, full of great desires, longings and prayers! If so, God will fill your soul, for He hears the humble, and despises not their tears. May God bless you, one and all. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psa 132; 2 Kings 3:1-20.

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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